

find a way to resolve this, and move forward.

The United States Constitution is a document that continues to reveal an uncanny resiliency after two centuries. It's as if the framers found a formula to adapt to contingencies unseen; and to circumstances unknowable. Their wisdom in drafting the Impeachment clause affords us the opportunity to seize one of the options we are considering today. If we now simply apply some common sense, we will find common ground, and the result will be the common good.

I have faith in the Senate, and faith in my colleagues, that we will do so.

The Senate may never decisively resolve this maddening legal argument; but we must find a way to end this lingering national torment.

As do all my colleagues, I love this country. And I care deeply for this institution, the Senate of the United States. I want to do right by both. Working together, Republican and Democrat, I think we can.

Just as we have sworn an oath today to put the Nation's interests above all others, tomorrow when we are sworn as judge and juror, we must do the same. That will require absolute fairness, due process, deliberate speed, and a final resolution of these charges. The Democratic caucus is committed to each and every one of those goals, and is prepared to proceed immediately toward achieving them.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SENATE AGENDA

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I want to welcome all the Senators to the 106th Congress. We have had an all too brief and somewhat overwhelming interlude since the last day of the 105th Congress in October. That interval turned out to be dramatic and eventful in more ways than one, and because of events that occurred therein, the Senate's agenda for this year will be more important than ever.

We will soon be considering charges brought by the House of Representatives against the President of the United States. I cannot think of a more serious subject. Yet the Senate has its well-established procedures to deal with this situation. While it is not exactly routine, neither is it totally unique.

We have our responsibilities under the Constitution, and we will meet those responsibilities in an orderly fashion. That is why I have met several times and talked by phone other times with Senator DASCHLE, the Democratic

leader, and why the two of us have met with the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, whose duty it is to preside over a Senate trial involving the President. We have both consulted and are still very actively involved in consulting with fellow Senators, with constitutional scholars, with officers of the Senate, in terms of the law and the rules of the Senate.

Our duty is clear: To demonstrate anew our national commitment to justice and fair play. That is what the public expects from us, regardless of their individual opinions concerning the President. That is why I am confident that is what they will receive. No Senator in this Chamber needs to be reminded that we are here first and foremost to serve the American people. Americans today look to the future with the same hopes that have inspired and sustained this country for more than 200 years. They want a better life for themselves and, more importantly, for their children. Not just economically, but also in terms of a decent future and a just and caring society.

I want to emphasize now that I have not gone to the media and outlined exactly how this impeachment process will go forward because no final conclusion has been made. This is not something that can be reported in an evolutionary way because there are too many things that have to be considered, too many different parties—Senate Republicans, Senate Democrats, House Members, the White House—and we have had to continue to consider the opinions of all to try to develop a fair way to have an expeditious trial that gets justice based on the rule of law. I think that it is more important that we hear from all parties and come to, hopefully, a conclusion that sets an outline of how we will proceed from beginning to end than it is to always be reporting on the current developments.

Never before have I had so much reported about what I was thinking, doing, or saying when I have said so little. I have been accused of being "holed up" in my hometown of Pascagoula, MS. Where would you expect me to be during the holidays? How about at home with my family and with my constituents, enjoying that precious season of the year.

However, I had no moss growing under my feet. I was talking with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, listening and thinking and developing and evolving a process that I think will get the job done. I believe we can very well achieve that goal within the next 24 hours—one that neither the House nor the White House will necessarily think is wonderful—giving all parties a fair chance to make the case and reach a conclusion that is equitable. We will get that done. And we will get it done, hopefully, in a relatively short period of time, without limiting it to a day or 3 days, or 3 weeks for that matter. It could very well take longer than that. But it will be a fair trial.

Then we have other very serious responsibilities that we must deal with.

It has been said as long as we are dealing with this issue that we can't deal with any other substantive issue in the Senate. Wrong.

We have responsibilities that go forward, and we will do our very best to have a dual track. Now, we may not be having debate and votes on the floor of the Senate on bills or on changes in the budget procedures around here, but we will begin to prepare. We will have our committee assignments all completed today. There will be committee hearings this week before the Judiciary Committee, before the Armed Services Committee, before the Education and Labor Committee—although it has a different name here in the Senate, I prefer to call it the Education Committee because it has that very important jurisdiction under its responsibilities.

We will begin the process and have hearings and meetings. Depending on how this process goes forward, and realizing that we have to understand the Supreme Court has a schedule that it has to comply with, which might give us some time to do some business, we will do our very best to get prepared for the regular legislative process while we are doing our duty with regard to impeachment.

But the goal that I hope we will move to immediately after the completion of the impeachment process, whenever that may be, is to develop some constant themes we want to work on during the 106th Congress. I think they can be described in words like these: security, responsibility, opportunity, and freedom. Now, those are not conflicting goals; they complement and support one another. Security, after all, enables responsibility; responsibility gives purpose to freedom; freedom ensures opportunity; and opportunity fosters security. When I talk about security, I think about security for my mother, security for my son and my daughter and my grandson. I think about health security, Social Security, national security, security in our neighborhoods. So that word encompasses an awful lot.

Our task is to advance on all four fronts this year: To enhance security, promote responsibility, strengthen freedom, and foster opportunity for all. In doing so, we face a tight schedule. We always do, but it is a manageable one if the Senators will help the leadership do our jobs. There are matters that we can consider promptly before our legislative committees even begin reporting major bills that must compete for a place and time on the Senate schedule.

One of the first matters we should take up is a clarification of Senate rules, to restore this institution's position regarding the consideration of authorizing legislation on appropriation bills. It is out of hand. The biggest fight now in all the appropriations bills occurs not on the appropriations but on amendments that are legislating on appropriations bill. I believe we can accomplish that change back to the way

it was in a bipartisan fashion. I certainly hope so.

I hope we can do the same thing regarding our budget process, although I may be erring on the side of optimism in that regard. This is priority legislation, I think, that is required to restore public confidence in the budget process. Do any of us feel that the process at the end of the last year was a good one? I don't think so. In the end, it is going to require will and determination by Senators and House Members to do their jobs on time and on schedule. There are some changes in the process that will help facilitate that. It will enable us to prevent Government shutdowns. It is ridiculous that there is even that possibility. It will control emergency spending. It has reached the point where we have not one super or extra special emergency bill each year, now we have to have two. And it makes a requirement that we take a long, hard look at how that is paid for and at current budget rules.

Important as budget reform is, rebuilding America's national security is even more pressing. Press reports have indicated that the administration will propose some increases in defense spending. That is good, and the Senate will take a very close look at that in committee and in the full Senate. I worry that those proposals are not sufficient or maybe the way it would be done is not the best way in trying to address the questions of pay and pensions and readiness for our military. But we should give that a very high priority. We have been losing ground in this area. This Congress must stop that erosion of our readiness and the morale of our military if we are going to be able to preserve our own national security and protect peace wherever our interests are in the world.

Education is going to be a central issue this year. Democrats say it is important and it will be a high priority. Republicans say it is a high priority. This past Congress passed not one, not two, but five major education bills, and we got very little credit for it. There was everything from some additional funds for IDEA to vocational education, higher education, and other things in between.

For starters, we must reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. That is important. Since its enactment more than 30 years ago, that legislation has been the channel through which tens of billions of dollars have flown from the taxpayers to Washington and back to the school districts again at the local level. In retrospect, perhaps that has not been the most productive system that we could devise, to put it mildly. I think we need to look at ways to cut out some of those stops along the way, the distance between the taxpayers, parents, and government, and how we improve our schools.

We need to find more ways to get more dollars back to the schools and especially back to the classrooms. We

need to strengthen local decision-making so the parents and teachers—the people most involved with their children—can act in the best interest of those youngsters.

We should foster quality teaching and promote family choice in education, especially for poor families whose kids are stuck in dead-end schools that are dangerous and drug infested and where they are not learning. We should not, on the other hand, presume to dictate to parents and educators what their priorities should be and how they should spend their tax dollars. So, clearly, this is something on which we will spend a lot of time.

We must continue to address the question of oppressive taxation. Most people will acknowledge that Americans are paying a heavy burden in taxes now. It affects the way they think and act as a family or how they save or invest. One of the most crushing tax burdens in this country is the payroll tax; it is a high percentage. That is the one in everybody's check at the end of the work week and they say, gee, this FICA tax is the one that is nailing me. Congress needs to look at that. We need more tax relief for working families so they can keep more of their own money. We need to have a tax code that is pro growth, pro investment, and pro jobs, so that we don't just give people a tax break but we give consideration to how the changes or tax reductions would lead to improvement in lives and jobs all across this country.

Tax simplification is a continuing need. We need to think about how we can get lower insurance premiums for the taxpayers, whether it is for their automobile insurance or their health insurance. We need to promote regulatory reform and relief across the board, but especially for small businesses.

Nothing this 106th Congress might do—whether in education, tax policy, or environmental protection—would mean as much to the American people as a long-term solution to the problems of Social Security and Medicare. So from the first day of this Congress right up to the last day toward the end of the year 2000, it will be my goal to see if we can find a broad, bipartisan agreement in those two crucial areas.

The Congress can't do it alone, though. The President has to provide leadership. It is not enough to just have conferences and talk about options. What is the solution? What are we going to be able to do to resolve the problems on Medicare? Will the Medicare Commission that reports back in March have a report we can act on or not? Or will it decay in partisan disagreement? Can we find a way to act in good faith on Social Security?

To show my good faith, I have said that if the President will send us a proposal he would like for us to consider, I will introduce his bill and we will begin hearings the next day in the Senate Finance Committee and see if we

can go forward. Or if that is not the way it can be done, I am willing to look at other ways that we can accomplish that goal. It is too important to just set it aside because it is too tough.

There are a lot of other issues we will deal with in the regular order. For example, bankruptcy reform, liability reform for charities, charitable choice in Federal programs, to end discrimination against faith-based organizations, prohibition against partial-birth abortions, as well as child custody protections to safeguard family rights, and modernization of financial services. I have spoken with Senator GRAMM and encouraged him, as the new chairman of the Banking Committee, which has jurisdiction, to pick up the legislation and see if he can forge an agreement that we can move forward on so that we will have broader choices and better service for consumers.

In due time, we will deal with all of those and a great many other subjects. During the next few weeks, I realize that the news media will be focused on one thing. My remarks here will be little noted or remembered—other than the part on the impeachment proceedings. But the record must begin to be made now that we have other very important priorities that are the people's priorities back in our respective States.

This Senate was designed by the Framers of the Constitution to be the steady element in Government, the place where passions are cooled and judgments come slowly.

It serves us well when we take our time and we make sure that the process is fair and the result is equitable.

I expect that to happen in the days ahead. No one can predict the outcome of the deliberations on impeachment, but everyone can expect the calm and careful exercise of our duty under the Constitution. That will not conflict with our role as legislators. It will rather confirm that we are more than mere lawmakers. As Members of the Senate, we are guardians of the rule of law and defenders of the rights of every American. That is our most important role, our most solemn charge, and our most enduring honor.

I yield the floor, Mr. President. I observe the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DORGAN addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

CHALLENGES FACING THE SENATE IN 1999

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I wanted to take just a moment following the presentation by the majority leader to